



Saluda County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report*

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**Total children in county under
age 6: 1,447**

**Total Children in county
under 6 living in poverty %:
7.5%**

Saluda County Highlights

- ABC Academy received a Level BB rating through the South Carolina ABC Child Care Program.
- 3 classrooms at ABC Academy received an environmental rating score over 4.0.
- Child care staff averaged 24.85 hours of training.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

"What happens in early childhood can matter for a lifetime. From pregnancy through early childhood, all of the environments in which children live and learn, and the quality of their relationships with adults and caregivers, have a significant impact on their cognitive, emotional, and social development."
(INBRIEF: The impact of early adversity on children's development. Retrieved July 17, 2009.
www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

Based on 2008-2009 school enrollment information, 86% of the K-2 population at Saluda Primary School, and 72% of the K-2 population at Hollywood Elementary School, are eligible for free/reduced lunch. Challenged with these high statistics regarding the poverty index in Saluda County and the limited funds available through First Steps, great strides have been taken to enhance school readiness skills for children in the county and community.

To ensure that Saluda County First Steps has a positive impact on the cognitive, emotional, and social development of our youngest citizens, the primary focus of our Quality Enhancement program is on children birth to entry into a 4K program. Primary focus of the CDEPP strategy is providing a high-quality 4K program in the private sector.

The Board of Directors work hard to ensure strategies are implemented that concentrate on the needs of children in Saluda County. We continue to collaborate with local and state agencies to establish the best possible services for our community.

Continually focused on children,
Deborah Padgett
Executive Director
Saluda County First Steps

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2008-09 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING.

Research-Based Home Visitation Strategy – Parents as Teachers

Program description: Through the Parents as Teachers model, a certified parent educator provided parenting education services to families with children aged birth to three. Saluda County First Steps actively worked with 17 families through bi-weekly home visitation, monthly parent meetings, and resource referral.

Program results:

- 14 families received services through this program. In some cases, 2 adults in the family participated, resulting in 17 adults receiving services.
 - Average months enrolled 8.77 months
 - Total home visits 181
 - Average visits per family per month 1.57
 - 3 families attended 100% of group meetings
 - All families attended a minimum of 67% of group meetings
 - 100% of families served had more than one priority risk factor
- 14 families were assessed using the Keys to Interactive Parenting Styles (KIPS). KIPS is an evaluation of parenting behaviors related to interactions between parents and children. It involves an observation of a parent interacting with their child for 20 minutes to examine 12 different behaviors. The KIPS is used to evaluate parents of children aged 2 months old up to 5 years of age. KIPS is an evaluation based on a 5-point scoring scale. Observations are done through use of a video tape. The video allows parent educators to study and analyze the behaviors before determining a score for the behaviors. KIPS scores of 4 to 5 reflect high-quality parenting, 3 to 4 reflect moderate-quality parenting, and 0 to 3 reflect low-quality parenting.
 - Average pre-assessment score 3.42
 - Average post-assessment score 3.99
- 9 families were assessed using the Adult Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI). ACIRI is an interactive reading inventory for parents and children aged 2.5 years old to 5 years old. The ACIRI is a literacy-specific evaluation based on the observation of a parent and child reading together and is scored on a 3-point scale. The tool evaluates interactions between parent and child relating to literacy acquisition.
 - Average pre-assessment score Adult: 1.39
Child: 1.31
 - Average post-assessment score Adult: 1.87
Child: 1.73

QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Quality Child Care

Program description: The Centers of Excellence (COE) program was a 2-year strategy. This past year completed the second year of this strategy. The focus of COE included intensive, high-quality technical assistance for teachers, research-based curricula for classrooms, incentives for center staff, integration with the home visitation and professional development/training programs.

ABC Academy was selected to participate in this program through a competitive bid process. The COE strategy implemented 9 components.

- Scholarships for eligible families
- Nurturing care and research-based instruction
- Appropriate developmental assessments for children
- Parent education and support
- Healthcare assessments for children
- Quality enhancement (technical assistance, instructional materials/supplies)
- Mentoring and training for center staff
- Staff incentives
- Sustainability plans for quality center operations

The COE site, ABC Academy, attained a Level BB rating through the ABC Monitoring Program. Along with this quality rating, the center received a \$2000 bonus from the ABC Monitoring Program.

Program results:

SCHOLARSHIPS

- 18 children received scholarships .
 - 100% of the scholarship recipients were at 130% or less of the federal poverty level
 - 67% of the scholarship recipients were at 100% or less of the federal poverty level
 - 50% of the scholarship recipients were at 50% or less of the federal poverty level
 - Additional risk factors included
 - 61% were from single-parent homes
 - 28% were identified with a development or physical concern
 - 17% were born to teen mothers
 - 11% had been exposed to domestic violence
 - 11% fit the McKenna-Vento act definition of homelessness
 - 6% had been exposed to maternal depression
 - 6% had been exposed to substance abuse
 - 6% had been exposed to parental incarceration

NURTURING CARE AND RESEARCH-BASED INSTRUCTION

- Creative Curriculum and High Scope were the curricula selected for classrooms. Through training and technical assistance, teachers were also provided information that focused specifically on infants and toddlers through the Program for Infant and Toddler Care.

APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

- Children were assessed with E-LAP, LAP-3, DIAL-3, and/or Denver.

PARENT EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

- Families receiving scholarships were required to participate in the Parents as Teachers home visitation program.
- Information on results of parent education and support can be found in the Family Strengthening section of this report.

HEALTHCARE ASSESSMENTS

- All children in the center were eligible to receive health care assessments

Description	Dental	Vision	Hearing	General Health	Speech	BabyNet
Assessments Conducted	43	34	34	43	28	0
Referrals Made	5	0	2	0	3	0

QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

- Each classroom was assessed using an internationally-renowned environmental rating scale (ERS). The ERS is based on a 7-point scale; 1 = inadequate, 3 = minimal, 5 = good, 7 = excellent.

Class	FY08 ERS Score	FY09 ERS Score
Infants	2.75	3.55
Toddlers	3.00	4.03
3s	4.51	4.56
CDEPP (4K)	5.0	5.9

- Total technical assistant visits were 101, with an average of 10.1 visits per month.
- Total hours of technical assistance were 506.25 hours, averaging 5 hours per visit.
- Lending libraries were established in each classroom.
- Children were provided a free book each month for their home library.

MENTORING AND TRAINING

- 548 hours of professional development training has been completed in the past two program years (FY08 and FY09)

- Providers averaged completing 29.95 hours of professional development training in FY08 and 24.85 hours of professional development training in FY09.

Topic Area	FY08 hrs	FY09 hrs
Curriculum	109.5	94
Program Admin.	15	13.5
Child Guidance	6	1
Health and Safety	25.5	22
Prof. Dev.	76.5	78.5
Growth and Development	43	39.5
Nutrition	24	0
Total hours	299.5	248.5
Average hours per staff	29.95	24.85

- Saluda County First Steps collaborated with Lexington County First Steps to provide a professional early education conference. Over 500 participants received high-quality training and professional development.
- 4 child care staff members are participating in the TEACH scholarship program to attain an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education.
- 1 child care staff member is participating in the TEACH scholarship program to attain a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education.

STAFF INCENTIVES

- Child care staff received bonus incentives for completing college-level coursework and professional development hours beyond the 15 hours required by DSS childcare licensing regulations.
 - 8 providers have completed twenty-five (25) 3.0 hr college-level classes from Spring 2008 through Summer 09 for a total of 75.0 credit hours.
 - 3 providers completed ECD101 since Spring 2008
 - 100% of the child care staff participating in the COE program have now completed ECD101
 - 10 providers received bonuses through the Centers of Excellence Program for completing coursework or professional development training
 - 5 providers received bonuses through TEACH

Term	# of college coursework hours completed
Spring 08	18 hrs
Summer 08	12 hrs
Fall 08	18 hrs
Spring 09	27 hrs
Summer 09	0 hrs
Total	75 hrs

- 8 providers participated in the Workforce Investment Act WorkKeys Testing
 - 1 received a Gold Award
 - 3 received a Silver Award
 - 4 received a Bronze Award

SUSTAINABILITY

- The school district will provide hearing, vision, and speech services for 3- and 4-year old children enrolled at ABC Academy at no cost to First Steps, the center, or the parents.
- Dr. Chris Collins, Saluda Smiles Dentistry, will provide free dental screening services for all children 1-year and older at ABC Academy
- Child care staff members will continue to participate in the TEACH Scholarship Program to attain higher levels of formal education in early childhood development and education, which will increase the professional environment of child care.
- The child care center will collaborate with Piedmont Tech – Saluda Campus for nursing students to conduct free general health screenings (weight, height, blood pressure).
- Saluda County First Steps will continue to collaborate with other agencies and other First Steps partnerships to provide high-quality professional development and training at minimal cost.

EARLY EDUCATION.

S.C. Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)

Program description: CDEPP offers state-paid tuition of 4-year-old kindergarten classes to eligible students living in the 37 trial and plaintiff school districts involved in the school funding equity lawsuit, *Abbeville et al. vs. South Carolina*. First Steps oversees CDEPP 4K classes offered in non-public school environments. To qualify for state-paid tuition, a student's family must qualify for TANF or free/reduced-price lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2007, and live in an eligible school district.

Program results:

- 17 students served
- 1 provider offering CDEPP 4K classes
- Received the third highest ECERS score in First Steps-funded CDEPP classrooms with a score of 5.91.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures</u> By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$79,007
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$66,268
Lottery Appropriation (<i>Fund 35</i>)	\$0
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$63,154
C.O.E. Appropriation (<i>Fund 65</i>)	\$135,602
N.F.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 70</i>)	\$0
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$0
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$2,351
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$27,500
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	\$31,607
TOTAL:	\$405,489

<u>Expenditures</u> By Program / Strategy Name	
Parents as Teachers	\$35,249
Mother Read / Father Read	\$7,068
Full-Day 4K (Private)	\$62,300
Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$118,647
Childcare Training and Professional Development	\$37,796
Scholarship Initiative	\$57,429
Public Health-Based Services	\$6,193
Health and Human Service Coord. (Public)	\$12,000
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$41,882
Administrative Functions	\$26,925
TOTAL:	\$405,489

CLARIFICATION(s)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Episcopal Church of the Ridge	\$81.00
M.E.G.A., Inc.	\$28.00
	\$109.00
TOTAL:	\$109.00

Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 42.3%
(at least 15% Legislative requirement)

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Name	Category
Renee Hauser	Pre-school through primary educator
Tiffany Bosket Darron Wilson	Family education, training and support provider
Debra Gantt	Early childhood education
Dr. Chris Collins Kathy Matthews	Healthcare provider
Aileen Connally	Faith community
Helen Hallman	Childcare
Steve Teer	Business community
Russ Terrell	Non-profit organization
Kristy Fulmer	Saluda County Department of Social Services
Misty Pearson	Saluda County Department of Health and Environmental Control
Pam Dozier	Head Start
Amanda VanScyoc	Saluda County Library
Dr. David Mathis	Saluda County School District One
Dr. Arlene Puryear	Aiken County School District
Melissa Keisler	Lexington County School District Three

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY09, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

Your 2008 School Readiness Risk Profile will be inserted by OFS after this section. For your reference, a PDF of this risk profile was sent to you along with your Annual Report Template

Saluda County First Steps has strong quality enhancement and child care professional development programs. The focus of our strategies has been child care for the past several years, which has afforded us the opportunity to enhance these programs and become known through-out the state as having formidable strength in this strategic area. This was recently affirmed when a center not currently participating in the quality enhancement program called to ask if we could help with their training needs. This center felt that the Saluda County training program was an outstanding, professional program that met their needs and provided them with tools and knowledge they could implement immediately in the classroom.

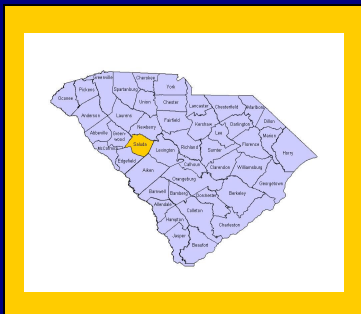
The SC General Assembly created in 1999 the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiative as a "comprehensive, results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through county partnerships, public and private funds and support for high quality early childhood development and education services for children by providing support for their families' efforts toward enabling their children to reach school ready to learn"...here's what happened next:

- *Through our strong quality enhancement program we have impacted over 300 children.*
 - o *On a 7-point Environmental Rating Scale, classroom scores have increased from an average of 1 (inadequate) to 5 (good). [1=inadequate, 3=minimal, 5=good, 7=excellent]*
 - o *Teacher education and professionalism has increased.*
 - o *Classrooms have been enhanced from minimally furnished to fully-furnished.*
 - o *Parent involvement has increased from non-existent to adequate.*
- *We have collaborated with DSS, DHEC, school district, county library, Head Start, Early Head Start, and low-income housing project sites to provide services to families and children.*
- *Collaboration with other county Partnerships and agencies has helped us to continue to provide high-quality training at a minimal cost.*
- *1 child care teacher has completed her 2-year early education degree and is currently pursuing her 4-year early education degree.*
- *4 child care teachers are currently pursuing their 2-year early education degree.*
- *100% of child care staff at ABC Academy has completed ECD101.*
- *ABC Academy staff has received training in Creative Curriculum and High Scope.*
- *ABC Academy has reached a Level BB rating in the ABC Monitoring Program.*
- *Saluda County First Steps implemented a strategy that requires child care staff to develop and implement an action plan based on professional development and training workshop participation. Adherence to the action plan is monitored by the technical assistant.*
- *Technical assistance in the Quality Enhancement Program has increased to an average of 30 hours per month.*

- *A minimum of 12 hours of certified training is provided annually. Centers in Saluda County and the surrounding communities are invited to participate in training.*
- *Saluda County First Steps collaborates with Abbeville, Greenwood, and Lexington County Partnerships to provide high-quality child care and early education conferences. More than 700 child care providers are impacted annually through these conferences.*
- *Participation in CDEPP since its inception.*
- *Executive Director participated in DSS grant-funded co-hort class at USC to attain a M.Ed. in December 2009.*
- *Executive Director reached Master Certified Trainer status through the Center for Child Care Career and Development. This is an elite status of approximately 50 Master Certified Trainers through-out the state of South Carolina.*

First Steps Strategy Areas	Notable Moments
Family Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained quality parenting after the parent has left the Parents as Teachers program
Quality Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of ABC Academy staff completed ECD101. • 1 staff member attained 2-year degree in early education. • 4 staff members pursuing 2-year degree in early education. • 3 classrooms receiving ERS above 4.0
Early Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in CDEPP since its inception.

Other notable moments:



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Saluda County

Total Children Under Six: 1,447

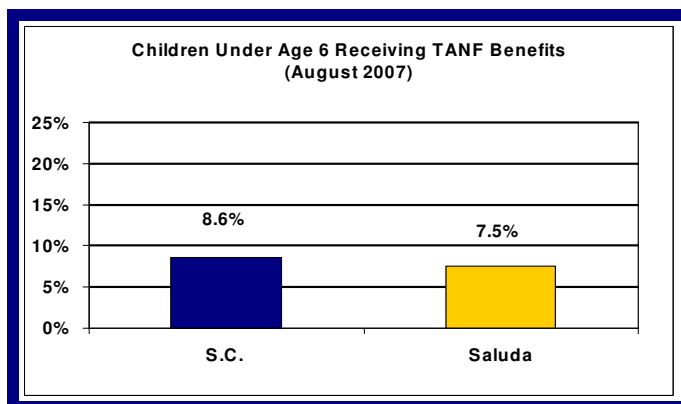
CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

Saluda County (2007): 7.5%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 13 Saluda County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.
- 108 of Saluda County’s 1,447 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.



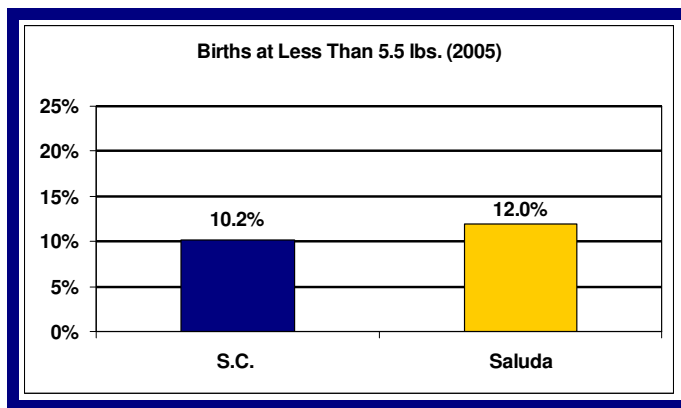
CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

Saluda County (2005): 12.0%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 8 Saluda County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.
- Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.
- 31 of the 259 children born in Saluda County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.

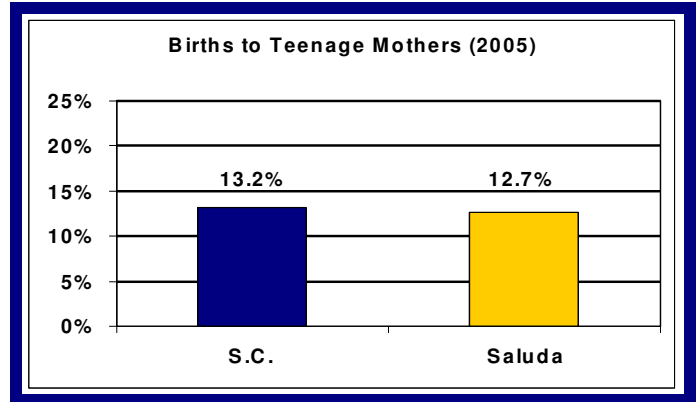


BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Saluda County (2005): 12.7%

Fast Fact: 1 in 8 Saluda County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.
- 33 of the 259 children born in Saluda County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

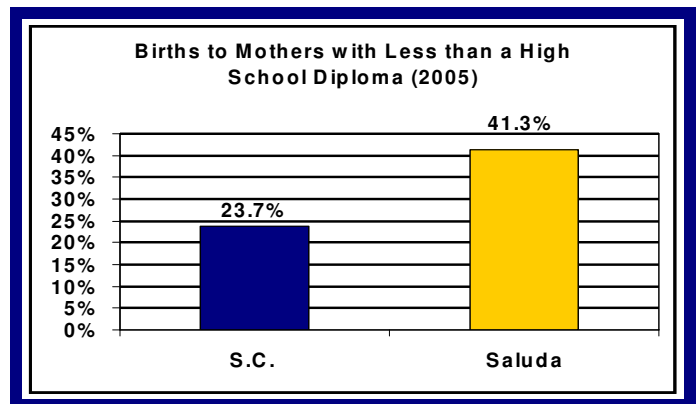


BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7% Saluda County (2005): 41.3%

Fast Fact: 2 in 5 children in Saluda County are born to mothers possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.
- 107 of the 259 children born in Saluda County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



All data provided by the SC Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics